



A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER  
COVERING VIDEO GAMES, ANIMÉ,  
AND RELATED TOPICS  
VOL. 2 • No. 14 • AUG. 1998

# ON SCREEN CHAOS



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## VAMPIRE SAVIOR



Cover art by Shawn "The Shred Man" Dumas

and other **CAPCOM** imports for the Sega Saturn

# ON SCREEN CHAOS

VOLUME 2 • NUMBER 14 • AUGUST, 1998

ON SCREEN CHAOS IS THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE ON SCREEN SOCIETY. FOUNDED IN JULY, 1997 AS ON SCREEN, DEDICATED TO THE REVIEW AND ENJOYMENT OF VIDEO GAMES, JAPANESE ANIMATION, AND OTHER RELATED TOPICS. ON SCREEN CHAOS IS COPYRIGHTED ©1998 BY THE ON SCREEN SOCIETY. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. THIS DOCUMENT AND ITS CONTENTS MAY BE FREELY DISTRIBUTED IN PAPER OR ELECTRONIC FORMAT PROVIDED THAT: A. NO FEE OF ANY KIND IS CHARGED FOR ITS DISTRIBUTION, AND B. PROPER CREDIT IS GIVEN TO THE AUTHOR(S) AND/OR ARTIST(S) AND THIS PUBLICATION.

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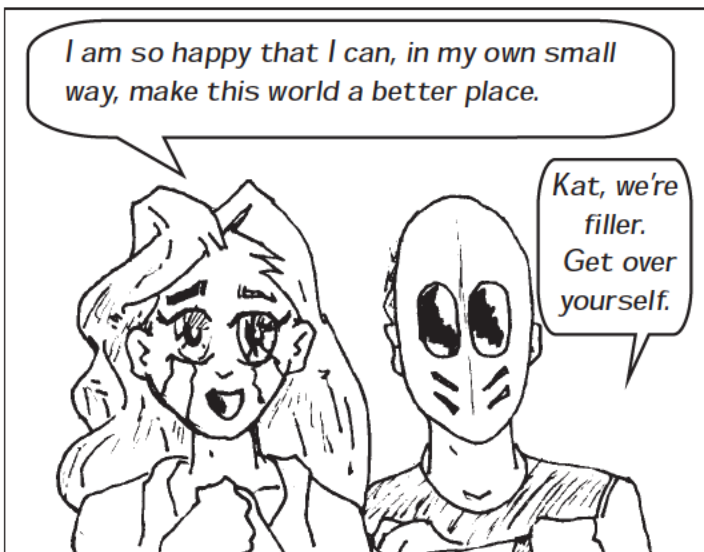
## WELCOME!

... to another wacky issue on On Screen Chaos. Well, it's been kind of a busy month around here, with finishing up the year end spectacular and planning for the upcoming GoRF '98: The God of Random Fighting tournament, hosted by Svenyip. This will be the first inter-division tournament in the OSFF, with members from both the Western and Wofpác division competing for the title of 'God of Fight.'

I want to apologize in advance; I will freely admit that I was lax in my editing duties, and there was some mix up with the quotation marks, and I just didn't want to fix them. So there are probably more typos than usual this issue; deal with it.

But the good news is, I'm actually updating the web site on a regular basis again. Check it out— it's shaping up nicely.

—TONY "XOT" MORSE  
On Screen Editor



## Seven years later, it's pretty much the same F-Zero X may fade into obscurity on the racing game-crowded N64

System: Nintendo 64

Publisher: Nintendo

Release Date: July, 1998 (Japan)

MICHAEL "SVENYIP" TROUPE  
On Screen Correspondent



If you're ancient like me (well, I'm only 24, but looking at all these young kids who will never know the joy of the Atari 2600 or Colecovision makes me feel old), you probably remember that when the Super Nintendo came out, one of the first games that was released was a driving game called *F-Zero*. It was a futuristic driving game that had a large variety of tracks and four different vehicles to choose from. The graphics were impressive for its day, to say the least.

Now, about seven years later, the sequel of this game has finally made its way onto the Nintendo 64. *F-Zero X* boasts an even larger number of tracks (at least two dozen) and a whopping *thirty* vehicles to race against or play as once you earn the right to "unlock" all of them.

The first thing many people may feel when they put the game in is that the backgrounds seem rather ... bland. Graphically, this game isn't really that much to write home about, and some have voiced the fear that the game will start gathering dust in people's homes after a week or two, due to the lack of any eye-pleasing effects to capture the attention of the players.

Where the game shines, though, is in its framerate. Everything happens at a high-detail 60 frames-per-second, and

even when you're playing four-player split screen, with lots of cars and activity on each "screen," the game barely slows down at all. And while I only played the easiest set of courses, the tracks have a lot of variety, swerving in different dimensions and having jumps and boosts all over the place.

Some players will probably wish for some sort of weapon system to be in the game— you can destroy other cars, but it involves tricky ramming and causing their shield meters to drop to zero before they reach the "shield restoring ramp" found once on each track. Once you begin the second lap (out of the three-lap races), you gain the ability to sacrifice shield energy for a brief boost of speed. And while it might be tempting, if your shields are at zero and you touch *anything*, your car will explode and you'll lose the race. So boost in moderation!

Driving games have never really been my cup of tea. *Gran Turismo* for the Playstation is the only one I've put any serious time into. But for the brief periodion which I was able to play this import, I liked what I saw. If you're the owner of an N64, you'll probably want to at least rent this one at some point.

While there's no threat of *F-Zero X* toppling *Goldeneye* as the best N64 game to date, it provides a solid four-player racing game for the system. The *only* other racing game that offered four-player support was *Extreme-G*, and that game suffered from considerable slowdown in the four-player mode. But it remains to be seen if, on a system already flooded with racing games, *F-Zero X* will be able to escape from the pack and rise to its own personal glory.



# WWF Superstars a nine-year old gem

## Svenyip gives us the lowdown on his recently-acquired arcade game

**System:** Arcade

**Publisher:** Technos

**Release Date:** 1989

**MICHAEL "SVENYIP" TROUPE**  
*On Screen Correspondent*

Well, I finally went and did it. Following in the footsteps of Tony and Neal, I bought my own full-size, genuine arcade game. Tony was responsible for actually finding the game, and he and Shawn were part of the "physical labor crew" that managed to lug that 220-pound monstrosity all the way from his home to Belchertown, Massachusetts.

But it got there, I've been playing with it for a few weeks, and now it's time to write that review. I'm in the middle of constructing a far more detailed FAQ, giving the advantages and disadvantages in each character, the exact damage every move does and more—but I could probably take an entire issue for that alone, so I'll write something a little more ... bearable? ... here.

Anyway, *WWF Superstars* can be played as a one player, two-player competitive, or two-player cooperative game. Each controller setup consists of a joystick and two action buttons. Button 1 is used for punching and trying to get your opponent in a headlock. Button 2 is used for kicking and trying to throw your opponent into the ropes. Pushing both buttons together causes you to run. The buttons perform different moves when you have your opponent in a headlock, when you're running, or when your opponent is running towards you. There are also top-rope moves, chairs and tables outside to use, and more.

The game can only be played in a tag-team, two-on-two format. There are six selectable characters: Hulk Hogan, the Ultimate Warrior, "Macho Man" Randy Savage, Hacksaw Jim Duggan, the Honky Tonk Man, and the Big Boss Man. Your objective is simple—do enough damage to one of the two enemy wrestlers to drop his life meter down to zero, then pin him and prevent his partner from running in and stopping the count. (If your opponent has zero life, his partner won't be allowed to run in to make the save more than once—otherwise it could be very diffi-

cult to successfully pin somebody.)

When it comes to character strength, Hogan and the Ultimate Warrior are probably the best, because they have the best punch-kick range and reliable special moves. Randy Savage is a strong fighter as well, but his kicks are a little short and his suplex move is often cancelled when you throw your opponent into the ropes. The Honky Tonk Man is good, except one of his super moves is easily reversed and does low damage when it does connect. The Big Boss Man has lousy brawling skills, but unique moves like the Boss Man Slam and Big Splash which make him useful in any team. And Hacksaw Jim Duggan is a bad brawler, has special moves that are often rope-cancelled, and lacks any special abilities to make it worth ever playing as him.

In the one-player mode, you fight against three different teams, one at a time. Beat all three teams and you get to fight a championship match against the champions: the Million Dollar Man Ted Dibiase and Andre the Giant. This is a hard match because the computer opponents often get priority during lock-ups, DiBiase has more moves than any other character, and Andre is immune to most attacks. (You can body-slam him sometimes and throw him into the ropes—that's about all that works.) Add to that the fact that *both* of them have submission holds that can end your game if you have four life units or less (out of a maximum 12 life), and you can understand why I *still* haven't beaten the champions without needing to power-up at least once during the match by adding another credit.

Victory over the champions gives you a brief "congratulations" screen, and then you get to do it all over again in Tokyo, with harder opponents. Ted Dibiase, oddly enough, will team with another random character in your second Tokyo fight. When you get to the fourth, you see the same "champion rant" from Dibiase and Andre that you saw before your first battle against them—as if they never lost the belts. But hey, it's wrestling, who needs plot continuity? Beat them a second time, and you get to see the closing credits and

officially "win" the game.

In terms of gameplay, there are a few game flaws that a decent player can take advantage of. For example, after performing a power move on an opponent, if you let them get up by themselves, they will be groggy for a few seconds, during which you can attempt a move from behind. Both the Warrior and Randy Savage will do an atomic drop, which is considered another power move, leaving them groggy yet again. You can't do this more than once or twice before the move will fail and be reversed, but in a human vs human matchup, three powermoves will drop your lifebar by 75%—and with no way to regain life, this strategy can result in quick wins and kills the vs. play. (It *might* be possible for a human opponent to escape this tactic, I'm not sure. The computer sure can't.)

There is also one major glitch that I discovered just this morning. Player one is always the "default" player to fight the computer. If another player challenges and wins, and continues to fight the CPU on the Player Two side, you can cheat to win the title match. If Player Two is forced to give up to either Ted Dibiase's or Andre the Giant's submission move, the champions lose and you win the belts! I guess it was programmed to think "if submission, then player one loses." It's not a very *good* strategy, because at least one of your characters will have an empty life bar for the next fight, but it is a *big* programming error.

*WWF Superstars* was the first WWF arcade game that I know of. The sequel, *WWF Wrestlefest*, was made by the same company. This one had four controllers built-in, and the option for both a tag-team slugfest and a Royal Rumble mode, where six wrestlers would go at it at once, new ones entering as others were eliminated by pinfall or being thrown out of the ring (it was surprisingly hard to throw people out of the ring with most wrestlers). While the four-player mode improves it a lot, I almost prefer *Superstars*, with its smaller, better drawn wrestlers and more solid-sounding damage hits. (Granted, the volume on my *WWF Superstars* game is up *really* high, and I don't know how to lower it,

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# Capcom + 4-Meg cart = Saturn success

## Outstanding Japanese conversions of 2-D titles could still save Sega

**MICHAEL "SVENYIP" TROUPE**  
*On Screen Correspondent*

The summer months tend to be slow when it comes to new video games being released. Games that sound promising get their release dates pushed back over and over again. Some finally get released in the fall, while others are destined to be "Coming Soon" until the end of time.

So what's an avid gamer to do? Well, if you happen to run the spending end of a video store like I do, you put the extra money available to good use, and acquire the latest and greatest Japanese Imports. Most of the games listed in this month's issue will never be released in the U.S., which shows just how foolish Sega of America is— if the American gamers could see the arcade-perfect ports the Saturn is capable of, people would flock to this "dead" system faster than people bought the Super Nintendo on its opening day. But I'm getting ahead of myself...

You'll notice all the Saturn import games in this issue are Capcom fighters. The Saturn's always been superior to the Playstation when it comes to 2-D fighters, and Capcom is the main company making use of the 4-Meg cart, so I figured it was best to "go with the power" as far as the Saturn Imports were concerned.



### X-Men vs. Street Fighter

Many of you were probably forced to witness the travesty on the Playstation that had the same name as this game. While the character choices were the same, the two-on-two fighting

that made the game worth playing was not available due to memory limitations. The load time was also rather large, about fifteen seconds before each fight. And some characters like Magneto and Storm were almost unplayable, because some of their moves caused the game to slow down dramatically.

I heard the hype about the Saturn version a few months ago, which used the new 4-Meg Memory Cartridge. This cartridge was supposed to help reduce the load time of the game, have space for additional character animation, and allow the true tag team battles of the arcade to be done. Needless to say, I was extremely skeptical about this "99% Perfect Arcade Port" people were talking about.

So how do you think I felt when I discovered that everything people were saying about this game was true?

I've never seen a fighting game that looked this crisp on any home system before. I can't really put my finger on it, but all the characters just look bright, sharp, and more colorful. The tag team mode is there in all its glory— you can switch in and out as often as you want, no loading required. The load time is minimal— no more than two seconds before each fight. And I haven't caught even a hint of slowdown in the game yet, even when characters like Juggernaut are being bombarded by two super moves at once.

You may have noticed that this 'review' is more of a "I can't believe they could DO this!" rather than talking about the game itself and how it plays. I figure by this point, everybody's played at least one of the "Marvel Characters vs Capcom Characters" games out there, so you know what I'm talking about. Do yourselves a favor— if you own a Sega Saturn, spend the \$60 to buy an import copy of this game and the \$25 to buy a 5-in-1 adaptor (I'm using the "Action Replay" myself, and it seems to work fine with all the games that require the 4-Meg add-on). It may seem rather expensive, but if you like X-Men vs. Street Fighter at all, \$85 is a small price to pay to practically own the arcade game.



### Darkstalkers 3: Vampire Savior

Compared to the legendary *Street Fighter* series, *Darkstalkers* has been more of an underground hit, at least around here.

It involves a group of stereotypical monsters (the Vampire, the Mummy, the Ghoul, etc) battling against each other in typical 2-D Capcom action to see which of them is worthy of the title of "Lord of the Night."

*Night Warriors: Darkstalkers' Revenge* was an upgrade which made the two bosses playable, added two new characters and more moves and features to make the fighting system more solid. In a way, it was like *Street Fighter II: Champion Edition*.

This latest addition to the *Darkstalkers* universe, *Vampire Savior*, adds four more characters into the mix, bringing the total up to 18. It also adds even more moves, giving every character at least two Super Moves, as well as a "Dark Force" move that acts like a custom combo of sorts. (The Dark Force brings both players into that character's 'home dimension,' where they either hit for more damage, have doubles that mimic their attacks, or other benefits until the Time Gauge runs out.)

I only played this game a couple times in the arcade, as it wasn't available anywhere nearby, but it looks like the Sega Saturn and its 4-Meg Cartridge have pulled off yet another almost-perfect arcade translation here. The characters are very well animated, having the same crispness seen in *X-Men vs. Street Fighter*. The action is fast-paced, to the point of being almost unplayable on the higher turbo settings. And load time is once again virtually nonexistent.

*Vampire Savior* is another solid fighting game for the Sega Saturn. It's supposed to come out for the Playstation some time around November, but there's no way it will be able to compare to this port. The best thing is that there is a hidden option menu which you can enable to turn all the Japanese text in the game into English! The game gets that much better when you can understand things like Jedah's victory taunt where he says "I understand your opinion. I just don't care about it."

Spend the \$60 for the import. It's worth it. (Contrary to popular belief, Svenyip is *not* on Sega of Japan's payroll.)

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# Could the 4-Meg cart have ressurected the Saturn in America?

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## Pocket Fighter

*Pocket Fighter* is a weird combination of a standard Capcom fighting game and *Super Puzzle Fighter II Turbo*. All of the characters in the game were from *Puzzle Fighter*, with

the exception of Ibuki, Tessa and Zangief who are new arrivals. It's a fighting game, with punches, kicks, special attacks and Super Combos. Sounds like any other fighting game out there, right?

Well, the similarity to any other game kind of ends right there. After all, what Capcom game ever had Akuma turning into a surfer dude and diving into the water at the end of a combo? Or Felicia switching from Darkstalker outfit to Darkstalker outfit until she finally ends her combo with Mega Man's Mega Buster? Or Chun Li offering a love letter to the opponent that causes damage if it 'connects'? Or Dan smacking people around with the corpse of his dead Dad?

Yes, it's *Pocket Fighter*. Perhaps the oddest fighting game out there in history, it involves a cast of twelve Capcom characters that morph into other characters during combos. It only has three buttons— Punch, Kick and Special. The strength of a character's special attacks is determined by how many gems have been collected by that character for the move of that color. (For Ryu, red gems power up his fireball. At Level 1, it only hits once, but at maximum level it hits three times and sends the opponent flying.)

All the characters are drawn in super-deformed style, which can make the actual fighting moves in the game difficult to pull off, due to the tiny arms and legs the characters have. Many of the moves and combos are so bizarre that we found ourselves trying to do them just to see what they would do, not caring about the damage or the effectiveness of the attack. For instance, Chun Li has a super where she turns into a traffic cop and summons up the bikes from her old background stage. It has about *four seconds* of lag time before the bikes actually appear, making the move worthless,

but that didn't stop us from trying it again and again just for comedy value.

*Pocket Fighter* is a *great* game to get people into the fighting world that normally aren't any good at the game. The combo system is easy to learn, the special moves for each of the characters are displayed on the screen, and the "Special" button means that even the scrubbiest person can pull off a Super Combo or two. Add to that the fact that Super and Special Moves cause *no* block damage, and nobody will be able to cry about how 'cheap' a move was. On the contrary, people are more likely to cry "Hit me with Dan's Elvis Song Attack again!"

The 4-Meg Cart is optional for this game, meaning that there are actually some load times in this game. Oh, the humanity! It's not really *too* bad, as the load times never exceed ten seconds, but they are noticeable. What I think the extra memory is used for is the spoken dialogue— the game actually speaks any of the words that the characters themselves "say" during their intros and ending sequences. But since it's all in Japanese and there's no known way to switch the text to English, I unfortunately know very little about what's going on in the Story Mode.

If you want a fighting game that's just pure fun rather than intense competition, *Pocket Fighter* is the way to go. The graphics are nice, and there aren't that many attacks that could cause too much slowdown to happen, so the Playstation might actually be able to handle this game without too much difficulty when the American version comes out in August. But when the time comes and you can compare the two games, I can safely say that the Saturn will be a superior version hands-down.

Again, a pity that none of these stellar titles, or future 4-Meg Capcom games like the *Dungeons and Dragons Collection* or *Marvel Super Heroes vs. Street Fighter*, are planned for release over here in the States. I'm assuming they think that the need for the 4-Meg add-on adaptor would reduce the sales of the games. Sega of America *no Baka*. Conversions like this show that 2-D, much like the Saturn itself, is far from "dead." But very few people over in the U.S. will have the opportunity to discover this.

## Know your allies and enemies in KoF '97

**System:** Sony Playstation

**Publisher:** SNK

**Release Date:** Mid-1998 (Japan)

**MICHAEL "SVENYIP" TROUPE**  
*On Screen Correspondent*

All of the characters from the various SNK fighting games— *Art of Fighting*, *Fatal Fury*, and of course the *King of Fighters* series itself— have rather in-depth character profiles and plot developments. They should; after all, some of these characters have been in fighting games since 1993, or maybe earlier. But unlike the *Street Fighter* universe, where each sequel just added new characters and features and

time kind of stands still, the SNK characters evolve through their experiences, gaining new friends and enemies. It doesn't really affect gameplay that much, but it makes for some interesting reading.

*King of Fighters '97* is the fourth of the *KoF* games that had the three-on-three team set up. You choose a group of three characters and fight other teams of three. A single fall eliminates a teammate, and once a team is wiped out, the winners advance to the next round. It's a neat feature that enables you to create as diverse a team as you might wish. However, in *KoF '97* it's helpful to know which characters are friendly towards each other. If you make a team in which

everyone hates everyone else, you'll get less life back between rounds and your teammates will never jump in to help you if you're caught in a hold.

*KoF '97* has an impressive cast of 26 playable characters, as well as five "enhanced" versions of characters and one final boss that you can only play as in Practice or versus mode. The characters in *King of Fighters* have evolved since the only U.S. Playstation-released *KoF* game, *KoF '95*. Now every character has at least two Super Moves, which increase in power and effectiveness if your Power Gauge is maxed out. The graphics and fights are more elaborate

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# What does the OSFF title stand for?

## The Shred Man shares some thoughts on the world championship

**SHAWN "THE SHRED MAN" DUMAS**  
*On Screen Columnist*

If you pay any attention to the articles in the newsletter, you know that the OSFF is our video game fighting federation. In it, the members of the federation battle each other one-on-one to determine the champion of all fighting games.

Since its creation, I've seen competition bring out the best in us all. All of the matches seem to be better when the title is on the line. My defenses against Xot, for example, always seem to come down to the last pixel of power in the third round of the final game. It's very exhilarating to emerge victorious from such a competitive matchup.

However, I have seen the ugly side of competition as well. We've all had our losses and bouts of 'sore loser syndrome.' I, too, am particularly guilty of this, I'm afraid. My loss at the Shotokan-free challenge caused me to go into a fit of rage that was rather unsportsmanlike. And I'm sure I'm not the only one who has felt the pressure of having the OSFF breathing down my neck, hungry for a shot at the gold.

As of late, there has been some debate as to how fair the rules for OSFF title matches are. There are those among us who felt the rules to be too restrictive, and unless the champion 'gave in' to special challenges, it was too hard to get competition going, or

too hard to win the World Title. (I should point out that the Eastern or "Wolfpác" division is far less strict in their adherence to the rules, and it wouldn't be unusual to see their belt handed back and forth a half-dozen times a day.) Now, there are rules that state that special challenges can occur and multiple fights can happen per day, with games not normally sanctioned. So, the basis of the controversy is this: Some competitors feel it's not right that a champion can refuse to do multiple challenges in a day, or refuse immediate rematches. This is, in essence, too restrictive.

However, if the rules were relaxed, then it would come down to every match we have being a title match. While that may make things seem more competitive, it would, in actuality, make the title completely meaningless. At the risk of paraphrasing a silly cliché, any one of the OSFF competitors, at any given time, can beat any of the others. There really is no glory in constantly challenging someone until you beat him for the title. I should know, as that's exactly how I won the OSFF title the second time around. Xot and I constantly challenged then-champion Svenyip, until one of us took the belt. After several hours, I walked away with a major headache and no sense of accomplishment.

But I did feel a certain sense of glory in defending the title against Xot in a standard three-game challenger's chal-

lenge. Knowing that it was an all-or-nothing challenge makes one fight better. If you go into a match thinking, "If I don't beat him, I can just re-challenge him," then you won't play as fiercely. It's a fact.

The OSFF title should be something that is earned. There should be a certain sense of prestige in winning the belt. Winning the title the first time was an excellent feeling; I was on top of the world that day. These two-day title reigns cheapen the image of the belt. The attitude that you can become the champion whenever you want to doesn't make being the champion very special.

The bottom line is, the rules *do* work. I'll be the first to admit that I was one of those who questioned them, but after a lot of thinking, I feel that things are okay. The competition is much better when title matches are something special. Special challenges are usually agreed to, so the fun factor is still there. If you feel you don't get enough shots at the belt, try for the Wolfpác title. It is my opinion that the World Title should mean something. And while I may feel cheated when I lose the belt, the fact of the matter is that it is all part of the game, and I hope that the person who beats me for the title really, honestly believes he accomplished something. *That* is what the OSFF Championship should be about.

I welcome rebuttals from my fellow competitors.

## More WWF action than you can shake a stick at

*Continued from Page 3*

so that might be why the hits sound better...)

I find it ironic that virtually *nobody* in *WWF Superstars* is still in the WWF. Hulk Hogan, Randy Savage, The Big Boss Man, Hacksaw Jim Duggan and Ted DiBiase have all joined WCW. The Ultimate Warrior is retired, but rumored to have also signed with WCW. Andre the Giant, unfortunately, passed away several years ago. Only the Honky Tonk Man still shows up in the WWF, and then only for the occasional "guest broadcaster" role.

All in all, though, for a nine year old quasi-fighting game, *WWF Superstars* is still kind of neat. It must be-- I still play it at least once or twice a day. Someday, if I can find it cheap enough, I'd like to pick up the old *X-Men* side-scrolling beat-'em-up game (the four-player model-- I don't think I could ever move the double-sized, six-player system). I think myself and the people I've lived with have blown enough money on the game over the years to own one. Maybe we just all liked hearing Magneto taunt us with the infamous words: "X-chicken!"

*Author's Note: This was the **short** review version? Sheesh!*





# Slayers a rare American-released hit

**Series:** *Slayers*

**Number of Episodes:** 20 (of 26)

**MICHAEL "SVENYIP" TROUPE**  
*On Screen Correspondent*

If you've seen any of my earlier Fansub Forum reviews, you're probably wondering if I actually bother to watch or buy any Japanese animation that isn't fan-subbed. And while much of my collection is made up of fansubs (let's face it, \$15-20 for three tapes is a pretty attractive price), there are a few series that have been officially released in America that are up to my wacky standards of "I must own this." *Slayers* is one of these series.

The name may throw some people for a loop. *Slayers* isn't so much a violent animé as it is a "Sailor Moon meets Magic Knights Rayearth meets Fushigi Yuugi" sort of affair. And I've liked all of those series in the past, so how could a compilation of them be anything less than great?

*Slayers* involves the adventures of one Lina Inverse, a notorious mage who robs from the rich to give to... herself. Despite her overwhelming greed (which as far as I can tell, is only used to pay for her next overwhelmingly large meal at the local tavern), she serves the cause of "good"—as long as you ignore any of the rampant destruction she happens to cause in trying to save the world.

While she has many side adventures, the main quest

involves trying to stop the dark acts of the Red Priest, Rezo. Known as one of the five holy wise men, Rezo has been blind since birth. And nobody (except for Lina, who happens to blunder into it) suspects what Rezo's real goals are.

Several companions aid Lina in her quests, including the strong but brain-dead warrior Gourry, the part-human, part-golem shamanist Zelgadis, and the defender-of-justice-in-training, Amelia. Each of them are as eccentric as Lina is in their own ways, so when you put them all together, nothing but sheer chaos is the result.

The main thing that keeps the series going, though, and makes it worth watching, is the fact that it rarely treats itself seriously. Every now and then, the animé will give you a couple of serious minutes in which it will advance the plot, but other than that, bad jokes, ridiculous animation, and outrageously powerful spells run rampant.

Words don't really do the series justice. If you're looking for something new, you might want to pick up the first tape of *Slayers* and take a look at it. You get a lot for your money, compared to other American released animé—four episodes (about two hours) for \$20. Compare that to other series like *Neon Genesis Evangelion* which is two episodes for \$30, and it looks rather attractive indeed.

If you're a person who prefers dubbed-in English voices to fansubs, *Slayers* has one of the best dubs I've ever heard. (I still prefer fansubs myself, almost to the point of feeling that dubs are "blasphemous." I'm weird like that.)



## Need for Speed 3 a top-notch racer



**System:** Sony Playstation

**Publisher:** Electronic Arts

**Release Date:** March, 1998

**MICHAEL "SVENYIP" TROUPE**  
*On Screen Correspondent*

I generally find myself unimpressed with racing games—at most, I'll play them once or twice to see a sampling of the different cars and tracks available, and then never look at them again. *Need For Speed 3*, however, is a racing game that I recommend everybody at least rent once, if not go out and buy.

What makes this game different than all the other racers? One main point is

that it's simply the best looking racer I've ever seen. The graphic detail is amazing, and the effects of night and bad weather driving are very well done. You have the option to play the game as either a straight "arcade" racer (where you simply pick a car type and go), or a more realistic setting where you can alter many different settings of the vehicle—tire handling, engine power and more. For me, this resulted in a completely undrivable car after I made all my alterations, as one touch of the wheel sent me flying off the road. But I'll be the first to admit that I had no idea what I was doing.

The other factor, which kept me coming back for more, is the "Hot Pursuit" mode. This mode involves you having either a race against other cars or a time trial, with a new twist... the police are out in force and are determined to make you follow the rules of the road. So you have to avoid officers that will try to ram you off the road and

roadblocks that the police set up in your path. Go too slow (either by slowing below 20 M.P.H. or by crashing into something to drop your speed), and you'll be pulled over and either fined or arrested, depending on how many times they've caught you before. If you're arrested, the game's over.

It's really fun to try to outrun the cops, and the witty (although somewhat repetitive) dialogue they yell at you is amusing as well. What's more, the image of the police lights shining off of your car at night is one of the best visual effects I've seen for the Playstation in a long time. I played it for about two hours straight, trying to beat the cops and at least complete one Hot Pursuit race. (I never did, by the way.)

I'd have to say that *Need For Speed 3* is probably the best arcade-style racing game I've seen in a long time. If you're looking for a more realistic racer, though, then *Gran Turismo* might be your cup of tea.

# 3 is not a magic number for Bub & Bob

**System:** Sega Saturn

**Developer:** Taito

**Publisher:** Natsume

**Release Date:** Mid-1998

**TONY "XOT" MORSE**

**On Screen Editor**



*Bust-a-Move 3* follows in its predecessors' footsteps by delivering a solid, enjoyable puzzle game for either one or two players. Unfortunately, the cosmetic changes and lack of major innovations make *Bust-A-Move 3* less of an upgrade than *Bust-A-Move 2*.

First off, let me mention the that the whole *theme* of the game has changed. Whereas previous games were directly descended from the *Bubble Bobble* series (the game is known as *Puzzle Bobble* in Japan), featuring characters and opponents from the well known classic, *Bust-A-Move 3* is based off the idea that other video games, jealous of the success of the *Bust-A-Move* series, have invaded to prove that they can beat Bub & Bob at their own game (although, for reasons unfathomable to me, Bub has been renamed 'Puzzlen,' and Bob is nowhere to be found.)

What this means in terms of game play is that you can now choose from among a cast of characters, similar in style to *Puzzle Fighter*, each of whom attacks with a different pattern of bubbles in two-player mode. A first in the series is that these characters can send over obstacle blocks, which can not be popped, only dropped; and they can also send bubbles from the *top* of the screen as well as the bottom. These characters come from various, non-specific games, with the notable exception of Sonic Blast Man, and none of them have the appeal of the greats from *Bust-A-Move 2*, like Beluga and the pizza girl.

The game itself, though, is essentially the same. Match three of the same color bubbles, and they will burst. There is only one new 'magical' bubble, the rainbow, which will change into the color of whatever bubble is burst next to it. This allows you to set up chain combos, like in *Puzzle Fighter*, if you have a large num-

ber of rainbow bubbles clumped together. Also added is a new type of obstacle block, which can neither be popped nor dropped, and only disappears when there are no other bubbles touching it. This has the effect of placing a static element on the board, which will progress with the advancement of the bubbles. Unfortunately, these new elements come at the expense of others: the fire, lighting, and water bubbles have all been scrapped.

As far as new modes of play, there are only two: a 'speed round', in which the five puzzles are linked together, to be scrolled down as you progress. These rounds also feature opaque bubbles, giving the game that icky polygon look. There is also a challenge mode, in which you are presented with five sets of five puzzles each, each with a specific technique goal: clear all the puzzles, clear them quickly, pop as many as you can, and use as few bubbles as you can. (The third round is a normal speed round.) At the end of each set of puzzles, you get a rating and a grade, and at the end of all 25, you get a score. Since it's incredibly vague as to how your technique is scored, it's difficult to determine how to get a higher rating. Also, you advance even if you fail to complete the puzzle, making it incredibly easy to get an excellent speed rating by simple committing suicide.

Finally, the music has been changed for the worse. There are very few new tunes, and existing ones have invariably been ruined (especially the original *Bust-A-Move* theme, which now has a voice sighing in the background which sounds way too much like a former boss of mine).

I don't want to come off too harsh, though; the speed rounds are a lot of fun, and there's a new set of puzzles signed by their creators. There are over 1,000 new puzzles, and the game is still a lot of fun to play. But it definately seems like they tried too hard to be like *Puzzle Fighter*, and just didn't do it properly. But with Saturn games being phased out (*Bust-A-Move 3* has not been released for Playstation), it can be had for a fair price. (I picked up mine for \$19.99.)

Essentially, I bought this game to have the whole series. If you're not a huge fan, it's probably not worth picking up. But if you don't already have one of the *Bust-A-Move* games, it's certainly worth spending twenty bucks on.

## KoF series another example of what should be released in the States

*Continued from Page 5*

than they were in the past, and damage is more reasonable. (Characters like the King of Cheese, Heidern, with his 80% damage life gaining super, no longer exist, and all the super moves have had their damage reduced.)

Like most of the *King of Fighters* before it, the game involves a tournament to see which team is the best of the best. Once that "champion" is crowned, they discover what evil force was working behind the scenes and have to stop it. It's a little contrived, true, because there's a new evil force behind *every year's* tournament, but the story actually ties it all together, and it's more interesting than "Oh look. Bison's trying to conquer the world. *Again.*"

The *King of Fighters* series isn't for everybody, because it feels different than combat in the Capcom universe. But the sheer variety of teams can keep you going for a long time, and if you spend some time to learn the combo system, you'll discover the game is a lot more complex than it first appears.

One last comment I have to make is about the music. All of the stages default to incredibly lackluster background noise as the "music." But about a dozen plot-relevant characters have their own background tunes that play when they appear on the scene. It's a shame everyone doesn't have music of their own, though— the silence is deafening at times. But the graphics and music during the final confrontations with the Orochi Team and finally the boss, Orochi, make it one of the most dramatic final battles I've ever seen. That, alone, is worth the price of admission and keeps me coming back for "just one more game."

It's a shame later parts of this series aren't being released over in the U.S. If you can handle the rather long load times, pick up the imports of the *KoF* series.

As for me, I'm anxiously awaiting the arrival of *King of Fighters 98/King of Fighters "Kyo"* in the arcade. It's supposed to have *all* the characters from *all* the previous *KoF* games returning— that's almost 50 characters! As long as it has game-play to match the character roster, it should be a phenomenal game.